



Afghanistan Engineer District South



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COP Sangar

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Many of us in AED South have had the opportunity to visit Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) such as Tarin Kowt, Wolverine, Dwyer and Farah. These FOBs typically have adequate housing with beds, showers, DEFAC'S and MWRs. Fewer civilian employees have the opportunity to work with COPs (Combat Out Posts). COPs are smaller than FOBs and extend further out into combat zones. Realty Specialist Damian Salazar and Environmental Specialist Michael Bell of the AED South Real Estate Division had a recent mission to COP Sangar and were asked to share their experiences.

The mission involved meeting with the sub-governor of Shajoy (Abdul Quyum) and the village elders in the area to resolve possible land and building disputes between the local government and the existing US Army Striker base. One real estate function is to legally secure land for base operations to ensure that local Afghans are fairly compensated for land the



US needs and to comply with regulations to allow for expenditure of funds to the base. Many of these real estate instruments are leases or "No Cost Land Use Agreements". One requirement for the lease or other real estate instrument is to conduct an Environmental Baseline Study (EBS) before, or as soon as possible after the base opens. This study defines areas of environmental sensitivity and hazardous waste areas which could impact the health of the soldiers. The area will be returned to this condition when the troops leave and the government resumes control over the land.



COP Sangar is a two hour drive north of Qalat and is within the city limits of Shajoy, on Highway 1. In country travel is a challenge and this trip was no different. The 82nd Airborne initiates the outbound travel and the trip starts smoothly. A Black Hawk helicopter transports Bell and Salazar to FOB Wolverine and they are



met by a Striker patrol. The next three hours are along back country roads to Qalat and then along highway one to Shajoy. The strikers have passenger seats which were either black and thick or thin and white. They got the white ones which produced a condition known as "Striker Ass." The trip was slow and deliberate as this particular Striker had already been hit by an IED on its first patrol. All occupants were medevaced out and all but one returned. They informed the civilians that they were about to go camping. They were correct.

COP Sangar (formally known as Crazy Horse) is a compound surrounded by mud and straw walls. Guard towers were con-



stantly manned. The most effective guard was a coveted stray dog who was adopted and feed by the Strikers and went crazy if anyone approached the camp who was not in uniform. She was the only female at the COP. Tents with cots supplied the sleeping quarters and bathrooms were the same type as the 54 year old Bell had used as a child in Tennessee. A medical, pharmacy and command post tent occupied the center of the COP, complete with a few computers with internet access and three primitive operating tables. An adjacent 82nd Airborne Post provided two casualties for the operating tables last summer from suicide bombers. Showers were just installed with hot showers beginning when Bell and Salazar arrived where available from 0800-1000 and 1400 -1600. The majority of the troops were covered in dust and grime from patrolling and maintaining strikers for months with only bottled water available for cleaning. A MWR tent was erected on Thanksgiving Day with an operating television; however, the tent was rarely used due to the cold. Most of the troops used a tent with Gym equipment for recreation. The tent had numerous shrapnel holes from a recent car bomb.



Recreation in the evenings involved writing letters, reading letters, guitar playing and reading....with an occasional water gun attack from a rival tent. A cook trailer provided a hot simple breakfast and supper. Lunch was MREs. Nights were pitch black with no outside lighting from the base or the City. Bell, Salazar and a reporter from the Washington Times were the only Civilians on the post which prompted many "what are you doing here" questions from the troops.

Michael Bell conducted the EBS and then joined Damian Salazar and the sub-governor and tribal leaders in the MWR Tent. Damian skillfully resolved the land issues and then toured the disputed area. An interpreter named Sayder, and re-named Tom Cruise by the troops for his good looks, was the go between. With the mission complete, several unsuccessful attempts were made to return, with success coming at 2 am after reporting at 2000hours the day before for a possible convoy. Damian caught a ride in a MRAP and Mike had the privilege of riding on an elevated middle seat of a 16 wheeler. They were dropped off at FOB Lagman for a return trip after five days.

